

Claims

[c1] What is claimed is:

1. An automated method of remotely activating options resident on a multi-vendor supported device comprising the steps of:

receiving, at a centralized facility, an activation key sent from a first location and configured to activate an option of an in-field device located in a second location;

sending the activation key and a verification script, from the centralized facility, to the in-field device at the second location;

receiving, at the centralized facility, a report generated by the verification script; and

if the report is satisfactory, installing the activation key in the in-field device to activate the option and if the report is not satisfactory, aborting activation of the option.

[c2] 2. The method of claim 1 wherein the in-field device located in the second location does not communicate with the first location.

[c3] 3. The method of claim 1 further comprising the step of bundling and compressing the activation key and the verification script together for transmission to the in-

field device located in the second location.

[c4] 4. The method of claim 1 wherein report includes at least one of:

options currently active;

options supported by the in-field device; and

dependencies of options supported by the in-field device.

[c5] 5. The method of claim 4 further comprising the step of determining if the report is unsatisfactory by determining from the report whether the option to be activated is one of currently active, not supported by the in-field device, and requires dependent activations.

[c6] 6. The method of claim 5 further comprising the step of automatically sending a message from the centralized facility to the second location prompting contact with a centralized facility if the report is unsatisfactory.

[c7] 7. The method of claim 1 wherein the activation key is unique to the in-field device.

[c8] 8. The method of claim 1 further comprising the step of receiving an access request from the in-field device at a centralized facility and requesting the activation key from the first location in response thereto.

[c9] 9. The method of claim 8 further comprising suspending the access request and repeating the request for the activation key from the first location until an activation key is received from the first location.

[c10] 10. The method of claim 1 wherein the in-field device is configured for medical imaging.

[c11] 11. A system to respond to a request to remotely enable an option resident on a multi-vendor supported in-field device, the system comprising:

a centralized facility located remotely from an in-field device having an inactive option, and the centralized facility having at least one access computer programmed to:

request an activation key from a remote secondary support provider;

select a verification script to check that the in-field device is in condition to activate the inactive option;

send the verification script and the activation key from the centralized facility to the in-field device; and

permit installation of the activation key in the in-field device to activate the inactive option if the verification script indicates that the in-field device is in condition to activate the inactive option.

[c12] 12. The system of claim 11 wherein the computer is fur-

ther programmed to activate the inactive option of the in-field device without requiring the in-field device to directly communicate with the secondary support provider.

[c13] 13. The system of claim 11 wherein the computer is further configured to receive an activation request from the in-field device including a unique host ID and wherein to request an activation key the centralized facility at least sends the host ID to the secondary support provider.

[c14] 14. The system of claim 13 wherein the activation key is based upon the unique host ID.

[c15] 15. The system of claim 11 wherein the computer is further programmed to receive a report automatically generated by the verification script from the in-field device indicating whether the in-field device supports the inactive option and whether dependent configuration is necessary to activate the inactive option.

[c16] 16. The system of claim 15 wherein the in-field device is in condition to activate the inactive option if the in-field device supports the inactive option and dependent configuration is unnecessary to activate the inactive option.

[c17] 17. The system of claim 11 wherein the in-field device is a medical diagnosis device.

- [c18] 18. A system to remotely enable an option resident on an in-field device, the system comprising:
an in-field device located remotely from a centralized facility and a secondary support vendor and programmed to:
send an access request to the centralized facility to request activation of an inactive option of the in-field device;
receive an activation key from the centralized facility that is uniquely configured by the secondary support vendor to activate the option of the in-field device;
receive a verification script from the centralized facility to authenticate a current status of the in-field device;
send a report generated by the verification script to the centralized facility indicating the current status of the in-field device; and
install the activation key to activate the option if the centralized facility indicates the installation is allowable.
- [c19] 19. The system of claim 18 wherein the access request includes a host ID that is unique to the in-field device and that is relayed from the centralized facility to the secondary support vendor to generate the activation key.
- [c20] 20. The system of claim 18 wherein the in-field device, secondary support vendor, and centralized facility are

remotely located from one another.

- [c21] 21. The system of claim 18 wherein the current status of the in-field device is unsatisfactory if the report indicates that at least one of: the option is currently active, the in-field device does not support the option, and absent dependencies preclude activation of the option.
- [c22] 22. The system of claim 18 wherein the activation key and the verification script are received by the in-field device as a compressed bundle.
- [c23] 23. The system of claim 18 wherein the in-field device includes a medical imaging device.